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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTION IN THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Ljudmila Boskova (Bulgaria), on the critical area of concern: women in power and decision-making

1. The Beijing Platform for Action[1] emphasized that a comprehensive, broad-based approach to women's empowerment was essential if women were to fully participate in decision-making at all levels of political, economic and social life. Women's political participation and equal representation are linked to wider issues of economic empowerment, education and training, human rights, social attitudes, values and social support systems. Achieving the goal of equal participation of men and women in decision-making would provide the balance that is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

2. Governments, international organizations, political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations should join together to accelerate the implementation of strategies that promote gender balance in political decision-making and in conflict prevention and resolution. They should integrate women's perspectives in all stages of policy formulation and decision-making. They should also support diverse decision-making styles and organizational practices and take the necessary steps to ensure a gender-sensitive workplace.

3. Research, including a gender-impact assessment of electoral systems to identify measures that would reverse the downward trend in respect of women in parliaments worldwide, should be supported.

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[1] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

4. Political parties are urged to find ways and means to remove discriminatory practices, incorporate gender issues into party platforms, and ensure women's access to executive bodies, including leadership positions, as well as to appointed positions and electoral nominating processes.

5. Mechanisms such as establishing a minimum percentage of representation for both sexes and/or quota systems should be instituted. Other temporary special measures for increasing the number of women in decision-making in legislatures and political parties should also be implemented.

6. Governments should establish gender balance in decision-making in administration and public appointments at all levels and in the judicial and diplomatic services by establishing specific time-bound targets.

7. Governments and civil society should promote awareness of gender issues and call for their consistent mainstreaming in legislation and public policies.

8. Governments should examine their communications policies to ensure the projection of positive images of women in politics and public life in general.

9. The media should project a positive image of women and women should use the media as a tool for their campaigns for political office and to publicize gender-sensitive public policies.

10. Governments, the private sector, political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations should review criteria and processes for recruitment and appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies so as to guarantee gender balance.

11. Training programmes in conducting campaigns, fund-raising and parliamentary procedures should be funded by Governments and political parties to encourage and enable women to run successfully for, be elected to, and serve in, public office.

12. Governments and the United Nations system should promote women's active and equal participation as governmental and non-governmental representatives, special rapporteurs and envoys in processes of good offices and mediation for peacekeeping and peace-building.

13. Governments and international organizations should actively promote the participation and equal representation of women in order to create an enabling environment for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction of their communities.

14. Governments should actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in politics and power structures through women's representation in decision-making, both in quantitative (critical mass of 30 per cent) and in qualitative terms.

15. Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations should continue to collect and disseminate data and sex-disaggregated statistics to monitor the representation of women in government at all levels, political

parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, as well as the participation of women in peace and security.

16. The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions (CCAQ/PER)) should continue to monitor steps being taken in the United Nations Secretariat to achieve the target of 50 per cent women in managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000 as well as steps to achieve gender balance in the United Nations system as a whole.

17. International and multilateral agencies should convene a workshop on best practices and lessons learned for achieving gender balance in institutions, including accountability mechanisms and incentives, and on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, including bilateral and multilateral assistance.

18. Member States should be encouraged to appoint women to United Nations delegations, including those to the Security Council, the First Committee of the General Assembly, other political, economic, trade and legal committees, and other bodies where women's participation is negligible.

19. Representation of minority women and women from other under-represented or disadvantaged groups should be promoted by Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations in decision-making positions and forums.